

It has long been clear that the United States bargain with the repressive Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak was both tenuous and inconsistent with our nation's values.

That is why I have worked to [reduce massive US military aid and invest more in civil society](#) . The demonstrations throughout the region have illustrated that a policy of backing other repressive regimes in the name of stability must be reexamined.

I have made clear through my work in Congress that we must not treat military aid to Egypt like an entitlement of \$1.3 billion a year, and over \$30 billion during the 29-year span of the Mubarak regime. This has not only fomented the ire of many towards the US, but has delayed the reforms to which those in Tahrir Square are entitled to.

We may well have turned a corner in the Arab world. This is true for the Egyptian government and I hope it will be true for US policy. We ought to support democratic institutions in words *and* actions by establishing a consistent and defensible position in our dealing with other nations. The president has taken a step in the right direction by urging Mubarak to step down, but he must also be clear about how we move forward and our strong support for true democratic reforms.

Change will not happen overnight. A government whose security forces have killed or jailed dozens, detained and beaten journalists and halted the free flow of information cannot be expected to reverse course and in seven months time hold free and fair elections. Just last November, Egypt's parliamentary elections revealed massive voter intimidation and ballot manipulation by the same people who are attacking peaceful protestors today.

The Egyptian people deserve reform and leaning on longtime Mubarak confidant Omar Suleiman in the name of "stability" is a continuation of flawed policies from the past. The burden for positive, responsible change lies not with the American government, but with the Egyptian people. It should be our policy to ensure that they are given the chance to succeed. The peaceful resistance and courage the demonstrators have shown makes clear that they are acting with the long-term wellbeing and prosperity of their country at heart and gives me hope.

An appropriate role for the US will be backing a balanced caretaker government that will set the stage for free and fair elections once political parties have had time to form after decades of oppression; supporting a strong and continued adherence to their peace agreement with Israel; and, finally right-sizing our aid to Egypt by focusing on the people and economic – not military – development.

If we are going to err, we should err on the side of democracy. We owe it to the brave men and women of Egypt and to our history to fully embrace peaceful and democratic reforms. Let this be one of many steps towards developing a more consistent and effective foreign policy.